

7 Aspects of Remote Work Entrepreneurs Should Keep When Returning to the Office

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When businesses shuttered across the country back in March, it wasn't clear when employees would be headed back into the office, if ever. While the dust is still far from settled, many companies are starting to prepare for eventual re-openings of the in-person offices – if they haven't done so already.

Just because workers are back to their desks doesn't mean that you have to leave behind everything your business learned while it was remote. Most companies invested some serious time and energy into developing a strong remote work culture among their teams. Why give it up?

Culture may be easier to maintain in a physical workplace, but there are still a few aspects of remote-work culture you won't want to leave behind, such as...

If there's one thing that remote work teaches businesses, it's the failure of emails. They're stuffy, impersonal and can lead to big drops in productivity as well. Email may be the norm for interbusiness communication, but there's no need to make it your primary method for talking with your team.

If they hadn't already, plenty of businesses used the shift to remote work as an opportunity to switch over to Slack or other instant-messaging services as their primary means of

communicating. Even if your company does move back into the office, there's no guarantee that you won't be forced to move out again. If that happens, the last thing you want is to have to fall back on email.

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2. A Focus on Employee Care

As workers first headed home, many business leaders were rightly concerned about the wellbeing of their employees, asking questions like: Do they have what they need to succeed? How are they coping with the stress? Is there anything I can do? This attitude has been long overdue in many corners of the business world.

Six Feet Apart, an organization devoted to helping people navigate a post-pandemic world, calls this phenomenon employee care, and its benefits are obvious: the happier your employees are, the more willing they are to give to and participate in your business. The focus on employee care may have just begun for some businesses, but it deserves to stick around for much longer.

3. Clarity Over Everything

If you encounter a confusing figure or a muddled piece of content on the job, all you need to do is pop over a few desks and have everything cleared up for you; for remote teams, the process isn't so simple. Giving instructions and then being forced to clarify them over and over is particularly inefficient over the web, making clarity a priority for teams not in the office.

While you were remote, you probably found yourself taking pains to explain things in full from the get-go in order to avoid any snags later on, so why change now? Continuing to

focus on clarity can help boost efficiency for your business in both the short and long terms, making communication and culture that much easier to promote down the line.

4. Flexible Work Policies

The whole 9-5 routine might have worked well enough before the pandemic, but it's become increasingly difficult to justify since. Everyone is productive at different times and has different responsibilities that may not sync perfectly with a traditional work schedule.

It's no surprise that 90 percent of employees consider flexible work policies to be their single biggest motivating factor towards productivity, but surprisingly few employers seem to take this into account. If you were lenient with start and finish hours while remote, you should be equally generous once the office opens back up, too – the effect on morale will be noticeable.

5. Casual Messaging Channels

There's no easy way to replicate "water cooler" conversations while remote, but that didn't stop most businesses from trying. Slack channels and email chains dedicated to casual, friendly discourse have almost become the norm across business, and they should stick around even after the water cooler is in use again.

A casual messaging channel isn't just good for culture; it can be equally useful for onboarding. Getting into office chatter can be difficult as a new employee, but having a text conversation to look through and learn from can help bridge that gap significantly.

6. Regular Team-Building Exercises

For a lot of companies, remote work culture meant putting in extra effort to keep people connected. One of the most popular ways of doing this is through virtual team building activities, a great way to force positive, friendly interaction in an otherwise professional space.

Just because your team has moved back into the office doesn't mean that these activities are no longer useful – in fact, they're more important than ever. Going from in-person to remote work and back has been a whiplash for many employees; these team-building exercises can help them acclimate to whatever environment they currently find themselves in and make the best of it.

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7. Privileging Face-to-Face Meetings

Endless Zoom calls may have been a drag, but they were necessary all the same. Ninety-three percent of all communication is nonverbal, making face-to-face contact an indispensable aspect of any business.

When you're working in an office, it can be easy to take the value of face-to-face meetings for granted, but doing so is a big mistake. People pay more attention to personal meetings, and the human element of it all can make soft the impact of bad news and make good news that much better.

Keeping around some of the successful elements of your remote work culture can make in-office life easier while also giving you the flexibility to move out again, need be. As always, putting the needs and wants of your employees above all else

is the first step. Everything else will come naturally.

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